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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: OMAN MEDIA REACTION: GAZA, DISUNITY, AND AGGRESSION

¶1. SUMMARY: This week, Omani dailies remained fixed on the Gaza crisis, condemning Israel and calling for Arab unity. Columnists used the beginning of 2009 to reflect on general factors leading to the current violence. Government daily "Oman" said 2008 saw an important decline in Arab unity, affecting Arabs' ability to respond to Gaza. Private daily "Al Watan" summarized factors leading to the crisis, noting Israel's love for war, American collusion, Palestinian factionalism, and Arab disunity. END SUMMARY.

"2008: Decline in Relations among Arab States"

¶2. On January 1, government Arabic daily "Oman" (circulation 38,000) reflected on 2008, claiming that a decline in inter-Arab relations weakened their ability to resolve Israeli-Palestinian violence. According to "So the New Year Becomes Better for the Arabs":

"It is necessary for all Arabs, and Palestinians in particular, to learn from the tragedies of the 2008, which witnessed a significant decline in relations and interaction among Arab states. The quickest path to failure is division. Arabs' efforts to solve their differences will benefit the Palestinians. The effort by Arabs to stop the brutal Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip and to force the international community to carry out its responsibilities will be more effective if international parties feel that Arab countries are serious about overcoming their differences."

U.S. "Praised Israel's Aggression"

¶3. On January 1, private Arabic daily "Al Watan" (circulation 42,000) listed factors leading to the current crisis in Gaza, noting Israel's love of "murder", the division of the Palestinians, a larger Arab disunity, and the U.S.'s praise for Israeli aggression. According to "Israel is to Pay the Price!":

"Israel's insistence on aggression against Palestinians and its rejection of calls by the EU and the quartet show Israel's disregard for the international community and its pleasure in murdering children, women, and elderly people. But there are many causes of the Gaza tragedy. The split in Palestinians' ranks led to the division between Arab supporters of Hamas and Fatah. This weakened their ability to pressure the international community to stop the massacre through the UN Security Council. Also, the White House has gone far in supporting Israel. It encouraged and praised Israel's aggression, rather than condemning them."

"Humanity is No Longer Valued"

¶4. "Al Watan" on January 2 stated that the Gaza crisis is the top and only priority of the Arab and Islamic world in the new year. "New Year and New Hopes" said:

"Last year was marked by pain and trouble. Economic and military events proved that humanity is no longer valued, despite all the calls to improve humanitarian conditions, particularly regarding Gaza. The Palestinian issue is not only the top priority for Arabs, but also the only concern for the Arab and Islamic world. The world has witnessed mass marches and demonstrations demanding a halt to Israeli attacks, especially after Washington blocked the UN resolution. When the UN failed to issue even one resolution to save Palestinian lives, it provided to be fully on the Israelis' side." GRAPPO